

CPYRGHT

## Least Wanted

FBI director J. Edgar Hoover has announced that he took a physical in August and "I was in better shape than I was in 1938." That's Hoover himself speaking and, as he has repeatedly assured us during his 46 years as head of the agency, "The FBI never makes recommendations or draws conclusions. We are a fact-finding agency." Draw your own conclusion: 76 next January, Hoover on the basis of his own fact-finding is good for another 32 or more years in charge of this nation's pursuit of the Ungodly. Who *they* are, Hoover decides. Formerly, the most wanted people were Communists. As former Attorney General Ramsey Clark says in his book, *Crime in America*, published last week, the FBI under Hoover "was still making pursuit of the Communist Party its claim to fame long after there was any risk to national security from that source."

But Hoover is a man who believes in keeping pace with . . . well, changing public tastes. Currently, he is in hot pursuit of young radicals: no fewer than nine on his list of the 16 most wanted criminals aren't criminals in the conventional sense at all, they're political ideologues (three of the nine are women). Hoover says he believes these young people are more dangerous than the old-style Dillingers because they're "less experienced" and so apt to blow the head off any person, cop or FBI agent who gets in their way. Skeptics who include other law enforcers have had the nerve to contradict Hoover on the point, and to suggest that the crimes record division of the FBI is also its public relations operation. We seem to recall that whereas the radical Angela Davis went along quietly when she was picked up in New York City, the late John Dillinger wasted not a second in attempting to shoot his way out of an FBI ambush. Seven people on the current FBI list of most wanted are tough criminals with long records, but the nine youthful politicals, wanted for alleged bombings, conspiracy and other ideologically motivated mayhem, are the ones who rouse the personal attention of the FBI chief, who spends a goodly portion of his time directing the public eye to campus disrupters and the like. "That's what knocks 'em dead out in Dubuque," one big-city police official explained to *The Wall Street Journal*. Who really cares all that much that professional criminals with several notches on their guns and axes are at large? Weren't they always? The *new* danger is these kids with shoulder-length hair and far-out notions and (maybe) home-made bombs. And, of course, black militants.

Burke Marshall, who was Attorney General Kennedy's civil rights assistant, has been quoted as saying that the FBI and Hoover "deliberately set out to get Martin Luther King, Jr." Hoover has never denied that the FBI tapped the late Dr. King's phone, but said it did so reluctantly, under orders from Kennedy. The truth seems to be that Hoover kept pressing Kennedy and his successors, including Clark (the worst Attorney General in 45 years, says Hoover) to wiretap King right up until two days before the civil rights leader was murdered. Clark calls electronic surveillance "a petty game, far from the arena of criminal activity, and wasting valuable time." He charges that in the organized crime area, from at least the late 1950s until July 1965 (when a

approval of the Attorney General, thousands of man-years of agent time were wasted." The tapping secured no convictions. There is strong reason, moreover, to believe that Hoover bugged as well as tapped King. The information obtained was used to suggest that King was guilty, as a black man, of something that Hoover seemed to feel was more heinous even than disloyalty. It was spread around that King indulged himself with white women.

If it's true, as one police chief declares, that the FBI's most-wanted criminal list "is not taken seriously by any law-enforcement people outside the Bureau," and that the agency is little better than a self-advertising, self-inflated folly, how does Hoover get away with it? Last week, he supplied part of the answer by tossing a bouquet at John Mitchell: "There has never been an Attorney General for whom I've had higher regard." That is only part of the answer, however. Mr. Hoover has got away with it under Attorneys General for whom he had no respect at all, and who knew it. He's box-office, that's the answer, and he has been box-office longer than anyone else, even John Wayne. He is immovable, if not immutable, like the Washington Monument. He has been around so long that younger people sometimes confuse him with the Hoover who was President, and *this* Hoover sometimes seems to share that confusion. In 1953, the FBI chief didn't hesitate to imply that former President Truman had lied about his bureau. No reprimand was forthcoming from the White House. Hoover has gone his own stern way, and no President has had the wish or guts to bring him in line or retire him. The day after his inauguration, John F. Kennedy invited two of his closest friends to make any recommendations they wished. Both advised: Fire Allen Dulles (then CIA director) and J. Edgar Hoover. The next day, Kennedy reappointed them both. It was smart politics, the pros said. The President very soon came to regret the Dulles reappointment—at the time of the Bay of Pigs. The regrets were slower to arrive in the second instance; but they came and were felt acutely by the President's brother. When Bobby Kennedy pressed him to hire more Negro agents, Hoover taunted the Attorney General by saying that if he didn't like Hoover's point of view or way of doing things, "why don't you get another director?" The FBI chief immediately reported that interchange to President Johnson, who, according to Hoover, said "Stand by your guns." There are 18,000 FBI agents, but the FBI refuses to reveal how many of these are black. It says it is not prepared to let the American public have that kind of information about its set-up. Civil rights never did interest Hoover. In the fifties, he thought it would be unnecessarily inflammatory to